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NEW LEGISLATION WOULD DEFINE HAZING CRIMES

LANSING – New legislation co-sponsored by Sen. Nancy Cassis (R-Novi) would make involvement in hazing rituals that result in injury or death a crime, punishable by either jail time or fines.

“Hazing is a cruel ritual that preys on students at a particularly vulnerable point in their lives,” Cassis said. “It is truly frightening what some students must endure to win the right to be part of a group.”

The legislation would address hazing incidents like the one at a University of Michigan fraternity that sent one pledge to the hospital with kidney failure. Pledges were deprived of adequate food, water and sleep, and forced to endure tasks like crawling over a glass-strewn floor and completing up to 1,000 push-ups. Because Michigan law does not currently address hazing, this event was not a crime.

If passed, this legislation would make a hazing incident resulting in injury a misdemeanor. An incident resulting in death would be a felony. Hazing victims would not be punished, even if they willingly participated in the hazing. In addition, student consent as a defense in hazing cases is removed.

“We commend Senator Cassis for her efforts to strengthen the tools we have put in place at Oakland University to prohibit all forms of physical and psychological hazing,” said Dr. Mary Beth Snyder, VP of student affairs at Oakland University.

Michigan is one of just eight states without anti-hazing legislation. Senate Bills 783 and 784 have been referred to the Senate Committee on Judiciary.